

~~ADMINISTRATIVE-INTERNAL USE ONLY~~

21 JUL 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Deputy Director for Support

SUBJECT : Overweight Employees

REFERENCE : Your memorandum, dated 14 July 1972, subject  
as above

1. As we have indicated previously, we welcome the Director's stated interest in the problem of overweight employees and the implications of this condition for their health. We think though that we should not mount an isolated campaign against obesity. In our experience, obesity is only one of the factors contributing to health problems. There are many others that deserve equal attention. A solitary medical attack limited to obesity is, in our judgment, too simplistic both in appearance and solution.

2. I recommend instead that the Director approve a Health Education Program. We had planned such a program for the near future. Recent events find us already engaged in education, on a variety of matters, and in a variety of ways, with new efforts aborning and general interest evident. The Director's interest and that of others provide the impetus to establish a recognized program now.

3. An Agency Health Education Program is a continuing organized effort by the OMS to present information (designed to improve and maintain health) to all Agency employees and at times dependents. It is an area where we have for years done much work with the individual but would now include a general approach to the Agency at large. There are many ways that such a program may find expression. The recent Drug Abuse exhibit is one method. We have in mind a variety of other approaches.

4. This is not a task that we can do alone. We need the assistance of all levels of Agency management. Without a

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supporting management attitude we remain well-meaning admonishers, a not unanticipated role for medical practitioners. In order to capture management's attention we recommend that the Director endorse our efforts and above all remind supervisors of their health responsibilities to themselves and their employees. We may also need the Director's help from time to time as the program continues.

5. To launch this Health Education Program I recommend the following specific actions:

a. The DCI to announce to his senior staff that he has approved an Agency Health Education Program, that supervisors have a vital role in this program, and that a major goal of the program is to assure that Agency employees look fit -- "no fat bellies".

b. The DCI to address a memorandum, essentially as attached, to his deputies launching this program.

c. Approval be granted for the OMS to issue a quarterly Medical Newsletter that would go to each employee at headquarters. A prototype of such a letter is attached. Also attached is a copy of an Executive Health Newsletter that we had previously considered. The difference in thrust should be evident and we recommend the Medical Newsletter as more appropriate to the needs of the Agency.

d. Approval be granted for the OMS to develop other means for communicating with Agency employees in this health education effort. These means would include -- as appropriate -- lectures, posters, film and slide presentations, and group discussions.

e. Approval be granted for the appointment of a Health Education Officer from among the current OMS medical officers, with such appointment to be announced by an appropriate Headquarters Notice. This

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officer would direct the operations of the program.

6. We have also mentioned previously, but must reiterate, that weight reduction programs/efforts have been notoriously unsuccessful. We tend to think that a continuing comprehensive educational approach will promote greater success. Nevertheless, a Health Education Program must rely on what is currently known. In regard to obesity, we believe that a modest research effort in this area is an appropriate element of any such program and do therefore plan such an effort as part of this

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7. All of the above activities would be initiated using the personnel and funds currently available to the OMS. It is our judgment however that this program may stimulate the need for additional OMS professional services to an extent that additional resources might have to be considered. If this develops, we shall apprise you of any additional resources required.

SIGNED

JOHN R. TIETJEN M.D.

JOHN R. TIETJEN, M. D.  
Director of Medical Services

Attachments

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Draft: OMS/EXO/[REDACTED]:ned  
Rewritten: OMS/JRT:jv (21Jul72)  
Distribution:  
Orig & 1 - Addressee (w/atts)  
1 - C/CD (w/atts)  
✓ 2 - D/MS Files (w/atts)

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Proposed DCI  
Memorandum